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Chairman:	Mr. Chowdhury	(Bangladesh)
later:	Mrs. Zubčević (Vice-Chairperson)	(Croatia)
later:	Mr. Chowdhury	(Bangladesh)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

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03-56521 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 92: Sectoral policy questions:preventing and combating corrupt practices and transfer of funds of illicit origin and returning such assets to the countries of origin *(continued)*

Draft resolution A/C.2/58/L.2

1 **Mr. Benmellouk** (Morocco), introducing the draft resolution on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the proposed text noted the work of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Negotiation of a Convention against Corruption, encouraged the Member States to participate in the Conference to be held in Mexico for the purpose of signing the convention, invited the Member States to enact laws to prevent corrupt practices and the transfer of illicitly acquired assets and to ensure the return of such assets to the countries of origin, and stressed the importance of regional and subregional cooperation. He amended the text by adding the words "where appropriate" after the words "regional and subregional cooperation", and expressed the hope that the resolution would be adopted by consensus.

Agenda item 94: Environment and sustainable development (continued) (A/58/125, A/58/204)

(a) Promotion of new and renewable sources of energy, including the implementation of the World Solar Programme 1996-2005 *(continued)* (A/58/164)

(b) Implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa *(continued)* (A/58/158)

(c) Convention on Biological Diversity *(continued)* (A/58/191)

(e) International Strategy for Disaster Reduction *(continued)* (A/58/277)

(f) Protection of global climate for present and future generations of mankind *(continued)* (A/58/308)

(g) Sustainable mountain development *(continued)* (A/58/134)

2 **Mr. Heinbecker** (Canada) said that the Convention to Combat Desertification, which had been adopted ten years earlier, could be an effective poverty reduction and sustainable development mechanism but that its implementation continued to be sidetracked by political and institutional problems. Desertification was a real problem that demanded real action, and Canada, committed to ensuring that resources were channelled effectively to meet the objectives that had been set, wished to voice its concern at the lack of transparency in the management of the resources of the Secretariat of the Convention. The Canadian Government had a legal and moral obligation to its taxpayers, and advocated raising the accountability, transparency and effectiveness of the Secretariat of the Convention.

3 In the absence of the Chairman, **Mrs. Zubčević** (Croatia), Vice-Chairperson, took the Chair.

4 **Mr. Sopoaga** (Tuvalu) said that seeking new and renewable energy sources was indispensable for small developing island states such as Tuvalu, which depended almost exclusively on imported oil and petroleum products. The resultant savings could be invested in areas such as industry, education and employment. In respect of climate change, Tuvalu was particularly threatened by the rise of the sea level. In fact, the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions was therefore a survival issue for low-lying islands and archipelagos. Tuvalu was pleased that some States had ratified the Kyoto protocol, whose early entry into force was vital. As a member of the Johannesburg Renewable Energy Coalition, Tuvalu looked forward to participating in the International Conference for Renewable Energy to be held in Germany in 2004 and stressed the necessity of financial assistance to enable developing countries to participate in seminars and conferences on climate change. Without such funding, small developing island states would be able to provide little input and that could seriously undermine the process.

5 **Mr. Paudel** (Nepal) said that Nepal was committed to promoting sustainable development and protecting the environment, particularly the forest coverage, watershed and the national parks. Poverty, burgeoning population, increasing urbanization and development activities had taken a heavy toll on the environment. The Government of Nepal had pursued a development strategy according highest priority to poverty reduction and people's participation. A Maoist insurgency had emerged approximately seven years

earlier, just when reform measures undertaken by the Government had begun to bear fruit, and was destroying the country's infrastructure, aggravating the problems of development and environmental protection. The Government needed resources to combat terror, reduce poverty, provide education and health care to all, create employment and procure environment-friendly technologies. Without additional resources, Nepal would not be able to fulfil the Millennium Development Goals, particularly the goal of halving poverty by 2015. Nepal therefore urged the international community to provide developing countries with additional resources extending official development aid and debt relief, opening their markets, and dismantling their farm subsidies. It was also imperative to take immediate measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and to curb the depletion of non-renewable resources. The burden of protecting the world environment was a responsibility of the community of nations and therefore Nepal supported an early entry into force of the Kyoto protocol and other global treaties.

6. **Ms. Rivero** (Uruguay), speaking on behalf of the Member States of MERCOSUR, Bolivia and Chile, expressed satisfaction at the entry into effect of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety and asked the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity to take the measures that were necessary in view of the adoption of an international instrument for a fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the utilisation of biological and genetic resources. Regarding climate change, the representative regretted that many of the countries mainly responsible for greenhouse gas emissions failed to meet their obligations in that area, and demanded urgent ratification of the Kyoto protocol. The MERCOSUR countries were prepared to study the conclusions of the Report of the Secretary-General on the Implementation of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (A/58/277). Concerned over the negative consequences of increased ultraviolet radiation on the flora and fauna, they asked for a rigorous implementation of the Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer and the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer. They supported the activities of the Secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, because man-induced loss of soil productivity and vegetation as a result of climate change was an object of concern to the region.

7. The MERCOSUR States, like all developing countries, were troubled by discrimination in the application of the principles of environmental protection, a situation that had been apparent in the recent failure of the Cancun Conference, where the industrialized countries had found pretexts to maintain agricultural subsidies and non-tariff barriers that distorted trade and caused irreparable damage to the environment by encouraging agricultural productivism. There was an obvious link between poverty, desertification and climate change and it was therefore important to implement conventions acknowledging the top priority of economic and social development and poverty reduction for developing countries.

8. The MERCOSUR States were pleased about the constructive work of UNEP in the area of environmental law, in particular under the 1981 Montevideo Programme for the Development and Periodic Review of Environmental Law. They were however concerned over the amount of the resources earmarked for the period 2004-2005 in the programme budget for the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, and hoped that the General Assembly would approve the funds necessary for the Convention and its subsidiary bodies to function adequately.

9. **Mr. Mabhongo** (South Africa) said that the implementation of decisions taken by the international community in the area of the conservation and management of the world's natural resources fell short of expectations. Greenhouse gas emissions were on the rise, while soil degradation, biodiversity decline and desertification had not abated. The recent Conference of the Parties to the Convention to Combat Desertification had highlighted the challenges faced as a result of desertification by many developing countries, particularly South Africa, 90 percent of whose territory could be classified as arid, semi-arid or dry sub-humid. The international community should therefore increase its support for the Convention by mobilizing adequate financial resources to assist developing countries with the implementation of their national action plans. South Africa had ratified the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety and believed that the next Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity should negotiate an international instrument for a fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the utilisation of biological and genetic resources.

10. In September 2003, South Africa had hosted in Durban the Fifth World Parks Congress, which had brought the importance of natural parks and protected areas to the attention of the international community. Regarding climate change, which threatened especially the sustainable development and the growth prospects of developing countries, South Africa urged the States that had not yet done so to ratify the Kyoto protocol. South Africa was committed to increasing the share of renewable energy in its total energy mix in order to improve access to energy, as an important element in poverty reduction. By taking measures in four areas - launching financial instruments, establishing an effective legal system, ensuring technology development and building capacities - the Government expected to promote the use of renewable energy, in particular from solar, wind, hydro and biomass sources.

11. **Ms. Mammadova** (Azerbaijan) stressed that life in all its forms was in danger and that as time passed common action on a global level was becoming more urgent. Azerbaijan's biodiversity was remarkable and represented a real potential whose protection was a national, regional and even global responsibility. However, these resources had not enabled Azerbaijan, which was beset by armed conflict, to emerge from a period of transition. Occupation of part of its territory and population displacements, after a period in which industry and agriculture had developed without consideration of such issues, had accelerated environmental degradation.

12. The Government of Azerbaijan was strongly committed to environmental protection and sustainable development. Security, stability, peace, respect for human rights and good governance were prerequisites for sustainable development. Political will and propitious international conditions were prerequisites for trust in international cooperation. Since 1995, Azerbaijan had launched several development initiatives, strengthened its legislation and given high priority under its national programmes to economic, social, environmental, agricultural, scientific and educational issues. Implementation of those programmes was expected not only to build the capacities of the Government in environmental management but also to improve the living conditions of the population and to prevent further degradation of the environment.

13. Azerbaijan believed that greater attention should be paid to the effects of desertification and drought, and stressed the key role of the Convention to Combat Desertification. It was further necessary to coordinate the implementation of that Convention, of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and of the Convention on Biological Diversity. Support for the New Partnership for Africa's Development should continue. Azerbaijan had ratified the Convention on Biological Diversity in 2000 and set up a State commission on biological and genetic resources, which was responsible for implementing commitments under the Convention. The Government, assisted by local communities, had accelerated its public awareness campaign.

14. Aware of the intimate linkage between biodiversity conservation and poverty reduction, the Government of Azerbaijan believed that conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity should be mainstreamed into the development strategies. Scientific and technical cooperation in that area should be strengthened with a view to building national research and assessment capacities.

15. The Government of Azerbaijan wished to establish protected areas but had been deprived of the right to exploit its own biological resources. Although no precise information was available on the status of one fourth of its forests - including State preserves and protected areas - that was under Armenian occupation, it seemed that massive felling continued. Azerbaijan recognized that it had a responsibility to preserve its biodiversity but was unfortunately unable to meet that obligation. The international community should urgently take effective steps to enable States to fully exercise their sovereign rights over the resources. In that connection, the representative of Azerbaijan appealed to the United Nations and to the international community to make every effort to ensure that the conflict between Armenia and her country would be resolved as soon as possible.

16. **Ms. Bovi** (San Marino) thanked the General-General for his exhaustive and useful Report on the Promotion of New and Renewable Sources of Energy, including Implementation of the World Solar Programme 1996-2005. In recent years, San Marino had noted with satisfaction that interest in the rational use of natural resources, in accordance with the Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development, had been growing. In that spirit, San Marino had ratified the Convention on Biological

Diversity, the Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Convention to Combat Desertification.

17. Believing that the use of new and renewable sources of energy could be further improved, San Marino supported the implementation of specific programmes and projects aimed at ensuring adequate energy services and a rational exploitation of existing and new sources of energy to alleviate poverty, especially in developing countries.

18. Cooperation among all countries on all levels and their commitment to adopt a new approach to development and environmental protection were key factors in the success of such initiatives. Cooperation could be made more effective by setting up a body exclusively responsible for coordinating the collection and dissemination of know-how and information on new scientific discoveries in order to make new sources of energy accessible to all countries.

19. While safeguarding the environment was an asset of key importance to the welfare of a country and that, as part of a long-term strategy, it ensured future generations better health and living conditions, San Marino was convinced that in the past the environment had played a secondary role in the activities of the United Nations. San Marino supported wholeheartedly the World Solar Programme and the principles enunciated in the Millennium Declaration, and hoped that does principles would soon be given the attention they deserve from all States, through global cooperation in the interest of all.

20. **Mr. Choon** (Malaysia) said that his country associated itself with the statement made the previous day by Morocco on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. Conservation of biological diversity remained one of the top priorities of Malaysia, to which the increasing loss of biological diversity was of considerable concern. As a member of the group of Like-Minded Megadiversity Countries, Malaysia felt that it had a special responsibility in that regard and in respect of the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the utilisation of biological and genetic resources. Malaysia had taken steps to protect biological diversity by ensuring that its development strategies were implemented in a sustainable manner.

21. Convinced that biological resources had a great potential for industry, Malaysia believed that the evolution of technologies in that area should continue to be monitored to prevent possible adverse effects on the conservation and rational use of biological diversity. Therefore Malaysia supported the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety and welcomed its recent entry into force, a significant development in the implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity.

22. Malaysia welcomed Resolution 57/260, in which the General Assembly had reiterated the importance of the decision of the Fourth Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization to examine, through the World Trade Organization Council for Trade-related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights, the relationship between the Agreement on Trade-related Aspects on Intellectual Property Rights and the Convention on Biological Diversity, as well as the protection of traditional knowledge. That would ensure that action would be taken to implement the commitment to promote a fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the utilisation of biological and genetic resources. Such an objective would best be achieved through an international system of accessing and sharing those benefits.

23. The reaffirmation by the World Summit on Sustainable Development of the fact that the Convention on Biological Diversity constituted "the key instrument for the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity and the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising out of the use of genetic resources" was a welcomed indication of growing awareness of the importance of biodiversity. Malaysia would therefore like to remind the Member States of the commitment they had made at that Summit to pursue a more efficient implementation of the three objectives of the Convention and to reduce significantly the rate of loss of biological diversity. To that end, it was imperative that the international community provided technical and financial support. In that connection, the Secretariat of the Convention and the Global Environment Facility (GEF) secretariat should intensify their cooperation toward enhancing the effectiveness of the financial mechanism in assisting developing countries to implement the Convention.

24. Malaysia noted the progress achieved in that area subsequent to the various related meetings organized in 2003 and welcomed the Report of the Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity (A/58/191). It warned however that the international community should not rest on its laurels but should

continue to strive for sustainable development, which was of paramount importance for poverty reduction.

25. **Mr. Chidyausiku** (Zimbabwe) said that it was necessary to increase substantially and urgently the share of energy obtained from renewable energy sources. The Johannesburg declaration had set clear and ambitious time-bound national targets for increasing renewable energy production. The partnerships for sustainable development resulting from the World Summit on Sustainable Development had heightened the interest in renewable energy sources. The World Solar Programme (A/58/164) had gained new impetus as a result of its recognition by the Summit as one of the necessary tools of the Plan of Implementation.

26. The partnerships identified in the World Summit and the commitments made in Johannesburg had set the stage for public-private cooperation on rural energy development, innovative financial instruments for private sector involvement in that area and progress in implementing the outcomes of the World Summit. The international community should effectively link the targets, timetables and commitments on resources and technology formulated at the World Summit with country-specific programmes to ensure that Agenda 21 and the goals of Johannesburg became a reality.

27. Zimbabwe fully endorsed the principle formulated by New Partnership for Africa's Development, according to which energy was the engine for development and the search for cheap energy called for the development of solar energy resources, abundant in Africa. Zimbabwe had a relatively high solar energy potential and considerable experience with renewable energy technologies. Increased use of energy from renewable sources was one way to improve access to energy services and to reliable, affordable, economically viable and environmentally sound energy resources. It was therefore necessary to accelerate the implementation of programmes that led to curbing or reversing environmental degradation, particularly in developing countries.

28. Since the World Summit for Sustainable Development, there had been an increase in the number of initiatives, including the Johannesburg Renewable Energy Coalition and the financing of projects in developing countries by the Global Environment Fund (GEF). The Zimbabwe delegation wished to pay tribute to UNESCO for its Global renewable energy, education and training programme and welcomed the decision by the Government of Germany to host the International Conference for Renewable Energy in June 2004. There was need for a comprehensive review of the World Solar Programme to identify its strengths and shortcomings. Member States had failed to convene a second World Solar Summit because of the prohibitive cost of hosting a Summit of such magnitude, but the ongoing restructuring of the World Solar Commission with the help of UNESCO was an attempt to reflect the concerns of all stakeholders in renewable energy.

29. **Mr. Chowdhury** (Bangladesh), Chairman, resumed the Chair.

30. **Mr. Al-Haddad** (Yemen) said that Yemen considered new and renewable sources of energy as being particularly important for reducing poverty and therefore believed that greater use should be made of those sources. It supported the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit for Sustainable Development, especially with regard to the diversification of energy sources and the development of alternative technologies. It was particularly interested in the component related to assistance to developing countries and to policies aimed at enabling them to use the new and renewable sources of energy and to access financial institutions, in particular the Global Environment Fund (GEF). Such measures would provide the least developed countries (LDCs) and the developing countries as a whole with financial resources, meet their needs in training and technical know-how and help their institutions to strengthen their activities in that area.

31. Yemen was one of the countries that suffered from desertification. In fact, sand covered much of its territory, especially in the East, the North East and its entire coastline. In those regions, the winds drove the sand toward the agricultural areas, causing the arable areas to recede and increasing the cost of their maintenance. Poverty was thereby aggravated. The country also suffered from hydric erosion. The representative of Yemen therefore wished to draw the attention of the Second Committee, the organizations of the United Nations system and the financial institutions on that issue so that the latter might fund studying and solving the problem.

32. As part to the follow-up to the World Summit for Sustainable Development and to the Second GEF

Assembly, both of which had dealt with the implementation of the Convention to Combat Desertification, Yemen noted that was responsible for that implementation and urged the GEF Council to take an appropriate decision at its forthcoming meeting in Washington, DC. Yemen believed that GEF should participate in the efforts put forth in the area of environmental protection by the LDCs, to which belonged.

33. Yemen had taken note of the Report of the Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity (A/58/191) submitted by the General-General and was interested in the activities carried out under the Convention, particularly in the recommendation formulated by the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice. The issue of deep seabed genetic resources and of ways to protect them and use them without affecting their sustainability was crucial.

34. International activities aimed at reducing pressure on biological diversity, particularly in view of rising population, prevailing modes of consumption and increasing generation of waste, played a key role in curbing losses in biological diversity. The issue of diversity should be mainstreamed into sectoral strategies and policies, work plans, regional, international and private-sector development initiatives and, generally speaking, into the framework of the Millennium Declaration.

35. **Mr. Yahya** (Israel) explained that Israel, a small but densely populated country, was characterized by large-scale immigration and population growth, rapid economic development, and complex and difficult geopolitical conflicts. The main challenge that it faced consisted in balancing the country's vital needs against the equally vital needs of environmental protection and sustainability.

36. Israel should therefore adopt a sustainable approach in policy and decision-making. The Government of Israel had recently adopted a sustainable development plan, according to which the current and future policies of the Israeli Government would be based on the principles of sustainable development practice, combining a dynamic economy, wise use of natural resources, protection of ecosystems and equal opportunities for all. Under that plan, the Government was mandated to promote the Plan of Implementation in accordance with the conditions prevalent in Israel and its economic capacity to finance activities resulting from the plan.

37. Examples of that approach were readily evident in the water and power sectors, while industry was reducing the quantities of waste that it produced. The private, public and government sectors were working, both separately and together, toward the conservation of biodiversity, especially by reintroducing or protecting particular species. These initiatives had been accompanied by growing public involvement. Environmental education, awareness and participation had significantly increased as evidenced by the growing number of non-governmental environmental organizations.

38. Israel recognized the significant advances made in sustainable development through international efforts, particularly the Convention to Combat Desertification and the work of the Conference of the Parties to that Convention, and attached great importance to the COP's call for closer collaboration among the Rio Conventions and other relevant international organizations.

39. Israel, a dryland country, had a great deal of experience and expertise in combating desertification. It was therefore unfortunate that, barred from regional activity and group consultations under the Convention to Combat Desertification, it was the only country that, although willing, was unable to share its knowledge in this regard. International advances should find expression in the regional context. Israel called upon the States of the region to work with it to promote sustainable development, cooperating on issues that were vital to all citizens of the region.

40. **Ms. Grindlay** (Australia) said that Australia associated itself with the statement made by New Zealand on behalf of the Pacific Island Forum. Australia took its obligations under the Convention to Combat Desertification very seriously and was pleased with the important work done on the issue of alien invasive species that threatened ecosystems, habitats or local species in the lead-up to the sixth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to that Convention, which met in April 2002. However, Australia had lodged at the time a formal objection to the adoption of the draft decision on alien invasive species and the associated guiding principles, because the text contained references that, Australia believed, entailed a high and unacceptable risk of increased trade protectionism.

Accordingly, Australia did not consider the draft decision on alien invasive species to have been validly adopted, given that it had been gavelled through in the face of Australia's formal objection. d That objection, however, would not in any way affect Australia's ability to meet the environmental objectives.

41. The seventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity would be held in February 2004 and Australia wanted to act constructively and cooperate with other parties and the Secretariat of the Convention to resolve the substantive issue. It was important to continue informal consultations on the issue in order to reach a decision that all parties could support.

42. **Ms. Piá-Comella** (Andorra) said, concerning agenda item 94 (g) ("Sustainable mountain development"), that the celebration of the International Year of Mountains had provided an excellent opportunity to bring out the complexity, diversity and importance of issues related to mountains and to putting them to good use. Like other governments, the Government of Andorra had set up a national committee for the International Year of Mountains. The committee's primary objective was to interest the population in the sustainable exploitation of mountains in general and of the Andorran mountains in particular.

43. The time was right to consolidate national-committee initiatives, national mountain-policies and the active participation of civil society and nongovernmental organizations in order to organize international partnerships for the sustainable development of mountains. The representative thanked the Government of Italy for the excellent organization of the meeting at Merano, and FAO for coordinating that joint initiative. In 2004, mountain countries should continue to cooperate. The Principality of Andorra planned to contribute to that cooperation according to its means.

44. **Mr. Lomba** (Gabon) said that the World Summit on Sustainable Development had afforded an opportunity to assess the activities carried out in the area of sustainable development and to map out new strategies for attaining the two main objectives of the Millennium: poverty reduction and environmental protection. The Convention on Biological Diversity stressed two themes that were crucial: setting up an international system ensuring a fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the utilisation of biological and genetic resources, and supporting initiatives for hot spot areas and other areas essential for biodiversity, promoting the development of national and regional ecological networks and corridors. Effective implementation of the Convention depended on the relation between safeguarding biological diversity and meeting economic and social needs. Good knowledge of the social context was therefore prerequisite to the sustainable management of global ecosystems, and Gabon suggested that the working group set up by the General-General should take into account the social structures of a population, how they used its territory, and the pressure that they exerted on the environment. The Convention should prioritize long-term objectives, including in particular raising population awareness of the importance of biological diversity for socio-economic development, and of the goods and services that it provided. The exploitation of deep seabed genetic resources fell within no national jurisdiction and therefore should be studied in detail by the Secretariat of the Convention.

45. The Convention on Biological Diversity had recognized the importance of the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity for meeting the food, health and other needs of an ever-increasing world population. Accessing and sharing genetic resources and technology were therefore indispensable.

46. Gabon had recently announced the establishment of 13 national parks intended to provide a source of revenue to the population under a plan aimed at the full exploitation of the carbon content of Gabonese forest products. The Government of Gabon intended to also set up put a forests- and fisheries-observatory as a national initiative under the convergence plan adopted by the Ministerial Conference on Forests of Central Africa (COMIFAC) - whose headquarters were in Yaoundé, Cameroon - and implemented with the cooperation of the European Union, the United States, Canada and Japan. Environmental problems could be addressed only through close cooperation among development stakeholders and partners. Accordingly, Gabon fully supported the idea of an international system whose main objective would be to ensure a fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the utilisation of biological and genetic resources.

47. **Ms. Zenna** (Ethiopia) said that progress in implementing the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction was made against a backdrop of ever-greater damages from environmental and technological

disasters. Such occurrences disproportionately affected developing countries, whose losses per GDP unit were about five times higher than those of wealthy countries and sometimes exceeded the value of a year or more of hard-won and desperately needed economic development.

48. Africa suffered natural disasters of various types: floods, drought and associated food insecurity, tropical storms and volcanic eruptions, which exacerbated the effects of such chronic problems of the region as poverty, wars and HIV/AIDS. Ethiopia believed that the UNDP strategy of support for building national disaster-reduction capacities was quite significant and deserved the full backing of the imitational community.

49. Ethiopia, a least developed country, faced formidable challenges in eradicating poverty and achieving sustainable development: frequent disasters, drought, famine, epidemics, floods, landslides and earthquakes. In particular, recurrent drought and famine had been affecting millions for decades. In 2003, had it not been for the rapid and coordinated response of the Ethiopian Government and the international community, drought would have led to a large-scale disaster. The Ethiopian authorities, under a strategy for ensuring households food security, had formulated rural development policies focused on attaining food self-sufficiency on the national level. Although the implementation of these policies was incumbent upon the Government and the population, a poor country like Ethiopia needed assistance in human and institutional capacity building on all levels. Reducing the vulnerability of the population to disasters and minimizing their impact on development efforts would also require substantial financial resources from the donor community.

50. Ethiopia supported convening the Second World Conference on Disaster Reduction in Japan in early 2005. With adequate preparation, the Conference could help to identify the gaps to be addressed and, through appropriate recommendations, set the vision for future work under the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, an essential instrument for promoting sustainable development.

51. **Mr. Don Nanjira** (World Meteorological Organization (WMO)) took note of the Report of the Secretary-General on the Implementation of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (A/58/277), adopted four years earlier, and expressed satisfaction with the work accomplished. Natural disasters featured prominently in WMO's mandate and programmes, not only because close to 75 percent of natural disasters had a hydrometeorological origin (floods, hurricanes, tropical storms or cyclones, droughts, weather-related forest fires, the El Nino/La Nina southern oscillation phenomena, etc.), but also, especially, because natural disasters knew no national borders, and without warning, indiscriminately, hit men and women, the young and the old, the poor and the rich. As stated in the report of the Secretary-General, they were constituting ever-graver threats. It was therefore necessary to focus on preventing and attenuating the effects of disasters, and find ways of transforming into specific activities the measures, decisions, declarations and plans and programmes of action adopted in international fora such as the summits and other conferences organized by the United Nations, under instruments such as Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation.

52. The conditions for the successful implementation of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction included: mobilizing financial and other support, working out adequate and efficient institutional arrangements to ensure that the measures agreed upon and adopted by disaster-reduction actors and partners were effectively implemented through specific actions and to facilitate assessing the progress made, and assisting developing countries, particularly those most vulnerable, with capacity-building.

53. WMO participated actively, as a scientific and technical organization, in global activities related to disaster prevention and mitigation, such as activities under conventions concerning the environment and the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction. WMO formulated disaster-mitigation programmes such as the World Weather Watch (WWW), the Global Observing System (GOS) and the Tropical Cyclone Programme.

54. Preparations for the Second World Conference on Disaster Reduction, which was expected to take place at Kobe, Japan on 18-22 January 2005, should be launched with vision, drawing inspiration from the World Conference on Natural Disaster Reduction held at Yokohama and the texts that it produced, in particular the Yokohama Strategy for a Safer World. It was necessary to set up a machinery for the preparation of the Second World Conference on Disaster Reduction.

55. Special attention should be paid to the situation of the countries and continents most vulnerable to disasters. Africa was the main example and its extreme vulnerability would be expected to receive concerted treatment at the Kobe Conference.

56. **Mr. Lolo** (Nigeria) recalled that the participants at the World Summit on Sustainable Development had reaffirmed the mandate of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) as the high-level commission on sustainable development responsible within the United System for considering issues related to the integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development. In fact, they had resolved to ensure, through decisions on targets, timetables and partnerships, increased access to such basic requirements as clean water, sanitation, energy, health care, food security and the protection of biodiversity.

57. Since the adoption of the Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development, the focus had shifted from principles and normative policies to implementation strategies. The Commission on Sustainable Development had tended to focus on specific measures, particularly by adopting a programme of work comprising seven two-year cycles. The representative recalled that the participants to the World Summit had stressed the importance of affordable and reliable energy services.

58. Nigeria recognized and supported the need for the diversification of energy as part of short- and long-term poverty-reduction strategies. The problems of consumption and production patterns and the question of the overall achievement of sustainable development should be addressed. However, the organizations of the United Nations system should refrain from re-opening debates and from actions likely to stir up controversy. In this regard, Nigeria believed that the establishment of a "world commission on renewable energy" was ill timed. The multiplication of bodies and the duplication of work should be avoided. What was most needed in United Nations activities was value added through the implementation of commitments, especially those of the Millennium Declaration, the Monterey Consensus and the Johannesburg Declaration.

59. Commenting the Secretary-General's report entitled "Environment and Sustainable Development - Implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in the Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa" (A/58/158), the representative stressed that Nigeria, tempered by its experience of desertification from the Sahara and the encroachment of the Atlantic Ocean on its southern coastline, had witnessed at first hand the effects of land degradation and the loss of livelihood. Despite Nigeria's best efforts to take positive measures to control the loss of arable land and valuable forests, studies suggested that between 50 and 60 percent of the total land mass of Nigeria would become arid by 2030. Nigeria welcomed the role of the Secretariat of the Convention to Combat Desertification, and of GEF as a funding mechanism for combating desertification. Nigeria believed that the Secretariat should be financed from the United Nations regular budget. Ascribing great importance to capacity building, Nigeria commended the activities of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), which formed the framework of environmental protection in Africa.

Agenda item 98: Implementation of the first United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (1997-2006) *(continued)*

Draft resolution A/C.2/58/L.3

60. **Mr. Aboultahir** (Morocco) introduced, on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, the draft resolution entitled "Programme of Action for the International Year of Microcredit, 2005" (A/C.2/58/L.3), in which the General Assembly stressed the importance of celebrating that event, which provided an opportunity to bring out the importance of significance for poverty reduction and for attaining the Millennium Goals. He called upon the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat and the United Nations Capital Development Fund to jointly coordinate the activities of the organizations of the United Nations System for the preparation and celebration of the Year and upon the Member States to set up national coordination or liaison committees entrusted with promoting activities linked to the preparation of the events. He expressed the hope that the resolution would be adopted by consensus.

Statements in exercise of the right of reply

61. **Mr. Sahakov** (Armenia), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, stated that the territory referred to in the declaration of Azerbaijan was entirely under the control of a legitimately elected government. The

authorities of Nagorny Karabakh had repeatedly invited international observers to visit the area in order to ascertain the facts. The Armenian delegation urged once again Azerbaijan to enter into negotiations and make a genuine effort to help to work out a peaceful arrangement.

62. **Ms. Mammadova** (Azerbaijan) stated that aggression and occupation were notions recognized by the United Nations, given that the Security Council had adopted four resolutions on that subject. Armenia had not heeded the recommendations of the international community or the Security Council resolutions which, noting the intensification of armed conflict, had expressed preoccupation with the displacement of Azerbaijani civilians, reaffirmed that territorial sovereignty and integrity must be respected and reaffirmed that international borders were inviolable and the use of force with a view to acquiring territory unacceptable.

63. Regarding Azerbaijan's position in the negotiations, the United Nations had recognized the territorial integrity of Nagorny Karabakh and reaffirmed that the region belonged to Azerbaijan. The fact that Armenia chose to ignore the calls of the Security Council for immediate withdrawal of its occupation forces from Nagorny Karabakh was a source of preoccupation not only for the Azerbaijani Government but also for the seven neighbouring countries and the international community.

64. Concerning biological diversity, the sovereign right of any State to exploit its own resources was recognized under international ordinary law and reaffirmed in Agenda 21. Azerbaijan's preoccupation, expressed in its preceding statement, was therefore natural: How could a country meet its obligations, if it lacked the possibility to do so?

65. Concerning the legitimacy of the election of the Government of Nagorny Karabakh, the Azerbaijani representative noted that those elections had not been recognized by the international community. The fact that the region constituted an inalienable part of Azerbaijan had been acknowledged in many documents.

66. **Mr. Sahakov** (Armenia) pointed out that he had refuted the allegations of aggression in exercise of the right to reply some days earlier. In respect of the status of Nagorny Karabakh, he wished to reassert that that region had never been part of independent Azerbaijan. Regarding the Security Council resolutions, in which the parties concerned were urged to immediately resume negotiations with a view to the resolution of the conflict under the peace process of the Minsk Group of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) and through direct contacts, the Armenian representative said that Azerbaijan itself was in violation of the provisions. The Azerbaijani representatives had systematically refused to acknowledge the fact that the measures taken by Armenia met exactly the requests made of it in the Security Council resolutions, namely to use its good offices with the authorities in Nagorny Karabakh in order to contribute to a peaceful resolution of the conflict.

67. **Ms. Mammadova** (Azerbaijan), noting Armenia's assertion that it had implemented all of the provisions of the applicable resolutions of the Security Council, asked if it had met the Security Council's main requirement, namely that the Armenian occupation forces should withdraw from the Azerbaijani territory immediately and unconditionally. Azerbaijan's position on cooperation depended on the application of that provision. Further, the efficacy of the CSCE Minsk Group depended on the attitude of the international community, which should not accept a fait accompli policy, because the responsibilities of the victim and of the aggressor were not equal.

68. **Mr. Ramadan** (Lebanon), noting that Israel had stated that it could not cooperate with the countries of the region and had subsequently invited those countries to cooperate in the area of sustainable development, asked how it was possible for the countries whose territories were occupied and their natural resources plundered to cooperate with the State that occupied the land? How could one ask a victim to cooperate with the aggressor? Every year, the Second Committee adopted a resolution reaffirming the Arab people's sovereignty on its natural resources in the occupied Palestinian territories and in the Golan, and the illegitimacy of the occupation of those territories. Lebanon was the first to hold that cooperation was in the interest of all parties, but cooperation should take place in the context of peace. Accordingly, at the Beirut Summit of 2002, all Arab countries had proposed to the international community an Arab initiative for peace. The peoples of the region aspired to sustainable development and wished to cooperate with all of the parties in the framework of a just and sustainable peace.

The meeting rose at 12.45 p.m.